

FACULTY DEVELOPMENT NEWSLETTER

OCTOBER 2010

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Online Teaching at Ball State – Challenges Lead to Benefits

Yasemin Tunc

Learning Technologies Consulting & Support



The first ever panel discussion on online teaching at Ball State was held on Wednesday, September 29, 2010. Panelists included Dr. Linda Taylor, Department of Elementary Education (Moderator), Dr. David Pearson, School of Physical Education, Sport and Exercise Science, Dr. Ron Kovac, Center for Information and Communication Sciences, Dr. Sam Cotton, Department of Technology, and Dr. Sushil Sharma, Department of Information Systems and Operations Management. The main topics discussed by the panel were content delivery, time management, and assessment in cohort based asynchronous online courses.

In keeping with the theme of the panel, “Rethinking Teaching,” Dr. Kovac mentioned that he concentrates more on what his students are learning rather than what he was teaching, in his online courses. Dr. Sharma reiterated that online courses were more learner centered and that “online education empowers the student to become a knowledge creator” instead of a passive receiver of lecture content. A variety of learning styles are better served in online education than the traditional face-to-face classes, panelists agreed.

In response to a question about how to deliver content in disciplines such as mathematics, a variety of technologies were discussed. Panelists advised using screen capture or lecture capture software to demonstrate difficult concepts to students. Dr. Kovac said that because of the abundant and ever changing nature of instructional technologies, the faculty member should meet with a technologist to determine the best course of action once the curriculum for the course is established.

When asked about the benefits about teaching online classes, panelists agreed that this form of teaching provided the most flexibility for both teacher and students. Dr. Pearson emphasized that not having a set class time allows the faculty member longer periods of

uninterrupted time to concentrate on research and writing. However, time management is an important consideration when teaching online. Dr. Cotton, whose students are scattered across 12 time zones, said that, as the instructor, he has to establish some ground rules for communication in order to respond to his students' questions while also attending to his other obligations.

Addressing concerns regarding the issue of assessment in online courses, panelists agreed that project based assessments and essay exams provide a better understanding of what students learned. Objective tests were used by some members of the panel as a formative assessment to help students learn, rather than measuring what they have learned. Considering the extra time required to grade and provide feedback to subjective assessments, panelists recommended that online class sections be limited to 20-30 students.

While Dr. Pearson first revamped his face-to-face courses with alternative assessments to adjust to the online environment, Dr. Taylor took the opposite approach where she changed her face-to-face classes based on her experience with online teaching. Panelists advised audience members to start experimenting with hybrid courses before starting to teach a course entirely online. Having students submit homework in digital format, meeting online one day a week or while the faculty member was away from campus were some ideas provided by panelists for the audience.

Based on their collective experiences, panelists recommended that a faculty member interested in teaching a course online:

- a. start the course design process based on course objectives.
- b. set expectations for the course and clearly articulate them in the syllabus.
- c. take time, at least one semester, to develop the online course.
- d. always ask for feedback from students to improve the course.
- e. build in plenty of interaction so students can learn from each other.
- f. prepare FAQs and post on course site to answer questions only once and, sometimes, even before they arise.
- g. add a resources section to the course site so that the students do not expect the instructor to troubleshoot their technical issues for them.

The panel discussion was very well received by a standing room only crowd. For those unable to attend, a tape of the event will soon be available on the ITAS website. If you have questions regarding online instruction or need assistance in developing your online course, feel free to contact ITAS at 285-1763 or itas@bsu.edu for a consultation. Also, visit our Online Teaching Support webpage (www.bsu.edu/itas/onlineteachsupport) to review and register for the upcoming *Developing Online Courses* workshop series.

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FACULTY SPOTLIGHT

Rethinking Teaching – Transitioning from Face-to-Face to Online Instruction



David Pearson

Associate Professor of Exercise Science



Sam Cotton

Associate Professor of Technology



Linda Taylor

Assistant Professor of Elementary Education

On Wednesday, September 29th, a panel of Ball State faculty shared their insights regarding the similarities and differences between teaching in the traditional face-to-face environment and online environment. (To read a summary of the presentation, go to the newsletter article, *Online Teaching at Ball State – Challenges Lead to Benefits*.) As a follow-up to the session, two questions were posed to the panelists.

1. As an educator, what have you found to be most beneficial about teaching in the online environment?

DAVID PEARSON (Physical Education, Sport and Exercise Science): The online experience has caused me to re-evaluate my teaching delivery and assessment for my face-to-face classes. This has helped me become a better educator. The online environment has also created blocks of time during the day which can be devoted to other scholarly activities.

SAM COTTON (Technology): One of the most beneficial things about the online environment regarding my students I perceive as being the flexibility it offers those who have other activities conflicting with the school commitment (like work, volunteerism, emergencies, and family commitments). Many of my students would not be students if it were not for the online experience. For me personally, the flexibility is also a great benefit, when issues arise at work or at home, I can address them on short notice without disadvantaging my students. It is a great benefit to be able to help people on short notice and in the depth required without conflicting with scheduled class time. If I stop for a few minutes to help someone either online or in my office, it does not serve as a distraction or negative impact on those in any of my classes.

LINDA TAYLOR (Elementary Education): The most beneficial thing about teaching in the online environment is that it challenges me to continue growing as a teacher. Specifically, it challenges me to consider 1) how to connect with students in meaningful ways, 2) how to best present course content to students, and 3) to keep up with the latest information on course topics so I'm presenting the latest research to students.

2. For those who have never taught an online course before, what would be their "first step?"

PEARSON: I would recommend that you begin by making changes to your face-to-face delivery with subject matter you are confident with. A good place to start is by having assignments turned in electronically. Try turning a scheduled class period into an online experience and then get feedback from your students. Lastly, begin to rethink your assessments and how they may become online, open book evaluations.

COTTON: I would suggest that the novice who has not taught online before start by taking an online class to get a “feel” for the some of the tools used, technical issues that can be anticipated, the time required, and some strategies to use that may not typically be used in a face-to-face environment. If possible, I would suggest to then transition an existing face-to-face course through hybrid stages and then eventually to being fully online. If this is not possible, I would suggest taking an existing face-to-face course and transfer the current content into electronic formats (Word, presentations, audio and/or video files, spreadsheets, or others). Once the material is converted to digital, then begin reformatting the material into formats and strategies that are more “online friendly” such as converting Word documents to webpages and then adding graphics and animations to improve appearance and that takes advantage of the more powerful online tools. An online instructor should continually be seeking and experimenting with new or unfamiliar tools to find those that best deliver content in the online environment and should be adding, removing, or revising these tools and strategies in ways to improve instruction. An online course should be continually evolving and improving.

Many schools will only allow those who have taken online courses in the past to teach online courses. This stated, it should be noted that there is a very wide variety of methods and strategies used in online education, so taking only one course reveals only a select group of ideas, strategies, and tools; so it is still important to explore other ideas (many, if not most, of which can be accessed on the internet without expense to the seeker).

TAYLOR: For those who have not taught online before, I would suggest that they begin by finding a support group of individuals with experience teaching online to help “coach” them through the process. This is not a task that must be taken on alone!

ITAS will be offering a series of workshops, ***Developing Online Courses***, for faculty members interested in converting a current course to the online environment or creating an entirely new online course. Go to Online Teaching Support for the workshop description and registration links.

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Teaching International Students: Student-Instructor Interactions

Linh Littleford

Department of Psychological Science

Cultural and Academic Adjustments Experienced by International Students

When starting college, most domestic students experience multiple stressors, including the loss of their usual social support and experiencing loneliness and homesickness. International students experience similar stressors, but magnified.



According to a recent study (McLachlan & Justice, 2009), within the first 6-12 months in a new country, 80% of international students surveyed had no close family or friends from their own culture geographically close. Some of these students had been raised in cultures where contacts with extended family members were the norm and where they had NEVER been alone. The study also revealed that 95% of the students felt homesick and lonely, and 85% of the students found it frustrating and difficult to establish friendships with American students.

Some of the international students need to cope with additional stressors that most domestic students do not experience. For example, they need to learn to interact with faculty and other students whose behaviors might reflect different worldviews, cultural norms, and values. They may have to consume unfamiliar foods and may not be able to access foods from their countries of origin. Some students may experience magnified academic pressures because their individual underachievement reflects negatively on both themselves and their entire families. In addition, students whose physical appearance and language skills differ from those of the majority of Ball State's domestic students may experience intolerance and discrimination from faculty, staff, other students, and those outside the university community.

Fortunately, research has shown that 95% of international students surveyed reported that the relationships they had with American instructors had been positive and that the instructors served as a major support system during the students' transition.

Students' Expectations of the Instructor

For many international students, their instructors may be the adults they know best in this country. Therefore, by being culturally responsive and inclusive when interacting with students, instructors can have a significant positive impact on international students' adjustment to their new culture, their academic performance, and overall well-being.

Some international students may expect instructors to act as parental figures, to help students develop as people, to know when students need help, to provide guidance, and in some cases, to tell students what to do because these were the norms in their home countries. In addition, some international students may view instructors as experts and authority figures whose job is to provide answers.

Meeting Students' Expectations

We recommend that you make explicit the extent to which you share and are willing to meet these expectations. We suggest that you provide examples of the types of questions or issues that you are willing to discuss with students, letting them know the permissible range of behaviors. Making the following statement may help students understand your expectations: "I welcome questions about course content and assignments, including how you'll be graded and whether you are making appropriate progress toward completing various assignments. I will also consider answering questions you may have about American culture, especially one-on-one. But, I will not be able to discuss issues related to my or your personal life or physical health. If you are unsure what topics would be appropriate to discuss with me, please ask. However, I reserve the right to not discuss them or to refer you to someone who may be able to better help you."

Some students may not feel comfortable asking questions or requesting help because they believe such behaviors convey criticisms of the instructor's competence. Discuss with

students how you interpret questions related to course content and assignments. For example, it might be helpful to reassure them that you will consider their questions as signs of engagement rather than criticism.

In addition to making general announcements in class, we suggest that you contact individual students to encourage them to inform you when they have questions or need assistance with issues within your specific parameters. Suggest ways they could inform you, such as by e-mail or by speaking to you before or after class, when they need assistance. Also, let them know that it is their responsibility to communicate with you when they need academic help.

Reducing Misunderstandings

To reduce the likelihood of misunderstandings when there are cultural and linguistic differences between instructors and students, we recommend that instructors, at the beginning of the semester, discuss diverse ways people from different cultures may communicate similar intentions, verbally and nonverbally. For example, some students may fold their arms, not make eye contact, or remain silent to show respect. Some students may frequently interrupt before the speaker is finished talking while others may need a long period of silence before interjecting their comments.

We also encourage instructors to differentiate between what has been said from how it has been said. In other words, it is important to assume that students have positive intentions. If you strongly believe that this is not the case, explain to students how their specific behaviors are being interpreted.

Additional Support from University Services

Besides academic problems, some international students and domestic students may experience emotional, psychological, and other life stressors that could affect their academic performance. Particularly if you do not feel comfortable or competent helping students address these challenges, we encourage you to familiarize yourself with campus services and resources for students. In addition, we recommend that you invite staff members of various

university service offices to make presentations to your classes to help students identify additional sources of support.

- [Rinker Center for International Programs](#)
- [Counseling Center](#)
- [Disabled Student Development](#)
- [Health Center](#)
- [Victim Services](#)

*This is from a part of a series of video modules, **Teaching International Students**, created by ITAS. Go to our [Teaching International Students webpage](#) for to view the module series.*

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EVENT SPOTLIGHT

Grading and Responding to Student Writing

October 14, 28; & November 11

2:30 - 4:00 pm

TC 412

Responding well to student writing—whether it’s feedback or part of the grading process—is a complex and time-consuming process. In this three-part workshop facilitated by Mike Donnelly (English), participants will explore effective and efficient approaches to responding to student writing, practice responding to sample essays, and discuss samples from their own classes. This workshop series is open to all faculty members, but will be particularly useful for those who will be teaching new core classes with a “W” designation.

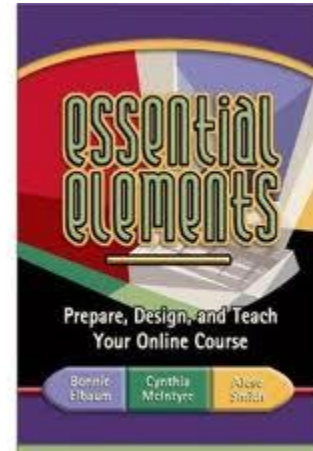
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THE BOOKSHELF

Essential Elements: Prepare, Design, and Teach Your Online Course

Elbaum, Bonnie, McIntyre, Cynthia, and Alese Smith.
Essential Elements: Prepare, Design, and Teach Your Online Course. Madison, WI: Atwood Publishing, 2002.

“With tips addressing everything from technology to student assessments, from online community building to collaborative teaming, and from scheduling and pacing to facilitating online discussions, we have the virtual classroom covered.” (p.7)



There's no doubt that a great classroom lecturer can be an inspiration to students. But almost all lecturers worry that their students are not learning how to discover, how to make connections on their own. If you have never taught an online course you'll be surprised to learn that teaching online, as described by the authors, has the potential for providing students with a truly comprehensive learning experience. An online course can offer students the chance to learn through exploration, to pursue related areas of interest, to participate in a community of learners, and to take advantage of opportunities to excel.

This book, *ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS: Prepare, Design, and Teach Your Online Course* offers an easy-to-follow guide that is based on a model developed from experience with hundreds of online courses. The authors are members of The Concord Consortium, a nonprofit educational technology lab dedicated to improving teaching practices through the appropriate integrated use of technology in the classroom.

Based on their experience, the authors offer the Concord Consortium e-Learning Model — which provides a working overview of online teaching — and seventeen essential elements that take you step-by-step through everything you'll need to know for successful online

teaching. The essential elements describe the necessary steps to put the Concord model into practice with these results:

- You will use courseware to display your course assignments and reference materials as text, with graphics, colors, and multimedia to enhance the presentation.
- Your course will have clearly written assignments that engage your students in active learning with each other.
- You, as the instructor, will play an integral role as a facilitator of that learning.
- You will use the Internet both as a resource and as a means for connecting yourself and your students based on your mutual interest in the content — regardless of your individual schedules, geographic location, or physical ability to come to class.
- You and your students will communicate and collaborate on a regular basis in a discussion area that allows for student-to-student and student-to-instructor interaction.
- Students will assess their own growth and learning through group discussion and reflection, peer review, instructor feedback, and self-evaluation.

The essential elements are presented in three sections — prepare, design, and teach — that will take you from the starting gate to the finishing line, offering complete assistance for the new online teacher and new techniques and tips for those who have taught online before.

With tips addressing everything from technology to student assessments, from online community building to collaborative teaming, and from scheduling and pacing to facilitating online discussions, the authors have the virtual classroom covered.

from attwood.com

***Essential Elements* is a resource for the ITAS sponsored workshop series, *Developing Online Courses*, facilitated by Linda Taylor from mid-October through mid-November.**

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SERVICES SPOTLIGHT

Consultations

The Office of Innovation in Teaching, Assessment and Scholarship (ITAS) staff is available to provide consultations in the areas of Teaching, Instructional Technology, Assessment, and Research Design. These can be arranged for individual faculty members as one-on-one meetings as well as large groups such as departments and programs.

TEACHING

Whether you are having problems with some aspect of your teaching or just want to bounce a new teaching idea off someone, our staff is available for consultation. We are happy to talk through a variety of teaching issues with you, provide feedback on your ideas, and ask the questions that will help you find your way to a solution. Our staff has years of teaching experience in higher education, but if another faculty member is a more appropriate consultant, we will make the arrangements to bring that person to the project. All consultations are confidential; our goal is to help you improve as a teacher, and we know that can feel risky as you try out new techniques and approaches.

INSTRUCTIONAL TECHNOLOGY

The ITAS staff is experienced in the use of instructional technologies available at Ball State. Whether you wish to explore options for engaging students in online or face-to-face classes, or update your course assessment plans we can assist. In addition, we provide consulting for the development of online course sites in Blackboard as well as survey or test development with inQsit.

Contact Yasemin Tunc, Director of Learning Technologies and Support, to arrange an instructional technology consultation.

ASSESSMENT

Classroom

We can assist in developing assessment ideas for your teaching situation as well as help you with assessment tools in instructional technology such as Blackboard, Web Gradebook, and inQsit. Contact Gary Pavlechko with regard to your classroom assessment needs and Yasemin Tunc regarding instructional technology assessment tools.

Program

Among the services we provide are developing survey instruments, conducting focus groups, conducting interviews, managing and analyzing data, providing institutional data, and providing extracts from larger university surveys. Contact Brian Pickerill for program assessment questions.

RESEARCH DESIGN

Our research design staff provides assistance with faculty, staff, and students on their funded and unfunded research projects as well as with graduate students on their master's theses, dissertations, or other academic research projects that require quantitative analysis.

Consultation is provided in the following areas:

- Research design
- Instrument/survey construction
- Techniques of data collection and entry
- Statistical analysis and interpretation

We can also assist with the design of surveys or questionnaires, such as those that will be placed in inQsit or are to be read by a scanner. For data being gathered by other means, we can provide consultation for how to enter the data in a format that will permit statistical analysis. Contact James A. Jones to arrange a research design consultation.

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UPCOMING EVENTS - October 2010

Monday, October 4

Online Grade Submission 11:00 am-12:00pm TC405

Blackboard: Engaging Students 2:00-3:30pm TC411

Tuesday, October 5

Developing a P&T Portfolio 9:00am-10:00am TC405

Wednesday, October 6

Developing a P&T Portfolio
(repeat of Tuesday session) 1:00-2:00pm TC405

Blackboard: Grade Center 2:00-3:30pm TC411

Blackboard: Q&A 4:00-5:00pm TC405

Tuesday, October 7

Online Grade Submission 11:00am-12:00pm TC405

Survey Instrument Design 2:00-3:30pm TC411

Tuesday, October 12

Clicker Workshop – Introduction to Student Response Systems
11:00am-12:00pm TC412

Wednesday, October 13

Blackboard: Q&A 4:00-5:00pm TC405

Thursday, October 14

inQsit – Creating Online Surveys 2:00-3:30pm TC411

Grading & Responding to Student Writing
(1st of 3 sessions) 2:30-4:00pm TC412

Video Conference overview for Faculty, Staff, and Administrators
3:00-4:00pm BC200

Friday, October 15

Video Conference overview for Faculty, Staff, and Administrators
10:00-11:00am BC200

Monday, October 18

Developing Online Courses: How Do I Begin?	3:00-5:00pm	TC405
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Blackboard: Content Management	3:00-4:00pm	TC411
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Tuesday, October 19

Online Grade Submission	9:00-10:00am	TC405
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Developing Online Courses: How Do I Begin? (repeat of Monday session)	3:00-5:00pm	TC405
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Wednesday, October 20

Blackboard: Q&A	4:00-5:00pm	TC405
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Thursday, October 21

Introduction to SPSS	2:00-3:00pm	TC411
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Friday, October 22

inQsit – Creating Online Tests	10:00-11:00am	TC411
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Monday, October 25

Developing Online Courses: Content Delivery & Instruction, Part 1	3:00-5:00pm	TC405
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Tuesday, October 26

Developing Online Courses: Content Delivery & Instruction, Part 1 (repeat of Monday session)	3:00-5:00pm	TC405
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Promoting Civility in the Classroom	3:30-5:00pm	TC405
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Wednesday, October 27

Blackboard: Engaging Students	10:00-11:30am	TC411
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Blackboard: Q&A	4:00-5:00pm	TC405
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Thursday, October 28

SPSS Syntax	2:00-3:00pm	T411
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Grading and Responding to Student Writing (2 nd of 3 sessions)	2:30-4:00pm	TC412
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Friday, October 29

Blackboard: Designing an Effective Course Site	1:00-2:00pm	TC411
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Online Grade Submission	3:00-4:00pm	TC405
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Innovation in Teaching, Assessment, & Scholarship

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